



M Media Studies (60 EC)
University of Amsterdam

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Summary

Standard 1. Intended learning outcomes

The panel finds that the MA Media Studies at the University of Amsterdam has a strong and distinctive profile, combining theoretical depth with methodological rigor and historical awareness. The programme is innovative and responds effectively to media trends, as shown by the successful launch of the Cultural Data & AI track. The intended learning outcomes are well-formulated, aligned with national and international academic standards, and tailored to each track. The programme strikes a good balance between theory and practice and engages the professional field in continually updating its profile.

Standard 2. Teaching-learning environment

The panel finds the learning environment of the MA Media Studies programme to be strong and thoughtfully constructed. The blend of core courses, research seminars, electives, and thesis work provides a progressive and well-balanced academic experience. Students can tailor their studies to match personal interests and career goals. The interdisciplinary orientation and consistent training in transferable skills across all tracks enhance both intellectual development and employability. The panel appreciates how the programme balances academic rigour with practical skill development. The choice of English as the language of instruction (as well as for the programme title) supports the programme's international outlook. The newly introduced track Cultural Data & AI is currently dealing with organizational issues due to an unexpectedly high number of students. To safeguard quality and coherence, the panel advises to introduce a cap on admissions.

Teaching staff are internationally respected researchers with a strong track record in both scholarship and education. Their expertise feeds directly into the teaching, ensuring that students are exposed to current debates and developments in the field. The panel commends the staff's commitment, cohesion, and capacity to create a stimulating academic climate.

Despite the high student intake—especially in the new Cultural Data & AI track—the programme has maintained a supportive learning environment. Student support structures are well-developed and include proactive tutoring, study advisers, and thesis supervision. The programme is well-matched to the labour market through the integration of career-oriented activities, such as embedded research projects and industry collaborations.

Standard 3. Student assessment

The panel finds that assessment in the MA programme is well-organized and diverse, reflecting the applied and interdisciplinary nature of media studies. Criteria are clearly communicated, and students receive detailed feedback. Thesis evaluation is rigorous, with transparent procedures and thorough feedback. The panel advises the programme to remain vigilant on clear research questions and a well-developed methodology. The division of responsibilities between the Examinations Board, the clusters that support it, and Assessment Committee is clear and effective. The Examinations Board fulfils its statutory duty. The panel asks the Faculty of Humanities at the UvA to consider more proactive monitoring of course assessments by the Assessment Committee.

Standard 4. Achieved learning outcomes

Based on the level of the MA theses and the performance of alumni, the panel concludes that graduates of the master's programme Media Studies achieve the intended learning outcomes. The panel found the theses

generally of high level, and alumni find positions in the professional field that correspond to the programme's aims and profile.

Score table

The panel assesses the programmes as follows:

Standard 1: Intended learning outcomes	meets the standard
Standard 2: Teaching-learning environment	meets the standard
Standard 3: Student assessment	meets the standard
Standard 4: Achieved learning outcomes	meets the standard
General conclusion	positive
Em. prof. Anneke Smelik (panel chair)	Mariette Huisjes MA (panel secretary)
Date: 9 July 2025	

Introduction

Procedure

Assessment

On 10, 11 and 12 March 2025, the bachelor's programmes Media and Culture, and Media and Information, along with the master's programmes Communication and Information Studies, Media Studies (60 EC) and Media Studies (90 EC) of the University of Amsterdam (UvA) were assessed by an independent peer review panel as part of the cluster assessment 'WO CIW and Media'. The assessment cluster consisted of 23 programmes, offered by the Erasmus University Rotterdam, Radboud University, University of Amsterdam, Utrecht University, Leiden University, Tilburg University, University of Groningen, Maastricht University and Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. The assessment followed the procedure and standards of the NVAO Assessment Framework for the Higher Education Accreditation System of the Netherlands (April 2024).

Quality assurance agency Academion coordinated the assessment upon request of the cluster. Fiona Schouten acted as coordinator and Mariette Huisjes acted as panel secretary for the assessment at the University of Amsterdam. They have been certified and registered by the NVAO.

Preparation

Academion composed the peer review panel in cooperation with the institutions and taking into account the expertise and independence of the members as well as consistency within the cluster. On 22 January 2025, the NVAO approved the composition of the panel. The coordinator instructed the panel chair on her role in the site visit according to the Panel chair profile (NVAO 2016).

The UvA staff members responsible for organizing the peer review composed a site visit schedule in consultation with the coordinator and secretary (see appendix 3). They selected representative partners for the various interviews. They also determined that the development dialogue would be part of the site visit. A separate development report was made based on this dialogue.

The programme provided the coordinator with a list of graduates of the master's programme Media Studies (60 EC) from the academic year 2023-2024. In consultation with the coordinator, the panel chair selected 15 theses. They took the diversity of final grades and examiners into account. 4 theses were selected from the specialization Film Studies; 2 theses were selected from the specialization Television and Cross-media Culture; and 9 theses were selected from the specialization New Media and Digital Culture. From the specialization Cultural Data & AI no theses were selected, due to the fact that the specialization only just commenced in the academic year 2024-2025 and no theses were available. Prior to the site visit, the programme provided the panel with the theses and the accompanying assessment forms. It also provided the panel with the self-evaluation reports and additional materials (see appendix 4).

The panel members studied the information and sent their findings to the secretary. The secretary collected the panel's questions and remarks in a document and shared this with the panel members. In a preliminary meeting, the panel discussed the initial findings on the self-evaluation reports and the theses, as well as the division of tasks during the site visit. The panel was also informed on the assessment framework, the working method and the planning of the site visit and report.

Panel member Wilbert Spooren was unable to attend the site visit for health reasons. After discussion, it was agreed to proceed with the visit by all parties involved (panel, institution, and secretary). The coordinator

informed the NVAO on 10 March 2024 of this agreement. After the visit, the panel member in question was informed of the outcome of the site visit and resumed participation in the preparation of the report.

Site visit

During the site visit, the panel interviewed various programme representatives (see appendix 3). The panel also offered students and staff members an opportunity for confidential discussion during a consultation hour. One person requested a consultation. The panel used the final part of the site visit to discuss its findings in an internal meeting. Afterwards, the panel chair publicly presented the preliminary findings.

Report

The secretary wrote a draft report based on the panel's findings and submitted it to the coordinator for peer assessment. Subsequently, the secretary sent the report to the panel for feedback. After processing this feedback, the secretary sent the draft report to the University of Amsterdam in order to have it checked for factual irregularities. The secretary discussed the ensuing comments with the panel chair and changes were implemented accordingly. The panel then finalized the report, and the coordinator sent it to the University of Amsterdam.

Panel

The following panel members were involved in the assessment of master's programmes Mediastudies (60 EC) at the University of Amsterdam:

- Em. prof. dr. A.M. (Anneke) Smelik, professor emeritus in Visual Culture at the Department of Modern Languages and Cultures of Radboud University (panel chair);
- Em. prof. dr. T. (Ton) van Haaften, professor emeritus in Discourse Studies of Dutch at the Leiden University Centre for Linguistics of Leiden University;
- Dr. P. (Pieter) Verdegem, associate professor in Technology and Society at the Communication and Media Research Institute of the University of Westminster (United Kingdom);
- Em. prof. dr. W.P.M.S. (Wilbert) Spooen, professor emeritus in Discourse Studies of Dutch at Radboud University;
- Dr D.J.A.M. (Danielle) Arets, professor Designing Journalism at Fontys University of Applied Sciences in Tilburg;
- A. (Anne) van Dijken BA, master's student Media, Culture & Society at the Erasmus University Rotterdam (student member).

Each panel member and the panel secretary has filled out the Statement of Impartiality and non disclosure agreement, as required by the NVAO.

Information on the programme

Name of the institution:	University of Amsterdam
Status of the institution:	Publicly funded institution
Result institutional quality assurance assessment:	Positive

Programme name:	M Mediastudies
CROHO number:	60830

Level:	Master (NLQF 7)
Orientation:	Academic
Number of credits:	60 EC
Specializations or tracks:	Film Studies; Television and Cross-media Culture; New Media and Digital Culture; Cultural Data & AI;
Location:	Amsterdam
Mode(s) of study:	Fulltime
Language of instruction:	English
Awarded degree:	MA
Submission date NVAO:	1 November 2025

Description of the assessment

Organization

The master's programme Media Studies (60 EC) at the University of Amsterdam – together with the dual master's programme Media Studies (90 EC) and the Research Master's programme Media Studies - is part of the cluster Media Studies. It has a programme director who ensures the quality of the programmes in that cluster. The programme director is supported by programme coordinators. The faculty's strategic education policy for all of its master's programmes is set out by the Graduate School of Humanities. It does so in close consultation with the programme directors.

Programme committee

The programme has its own programme committee. It consists of an equal number of students and teaching staff and acts as a bridge between students, staff and programme management. The programme committees regularly confer with the programme directors.

Examinations Board

As of 1 September 2022, the faculty has a joint Examinations Board. This Examinations Board consists of a chair, eight members and an external member. In addition, the internal members each chair one of the eight Examinations Board clusters, one of which is the cluster Media Studies. Delegates of each programme participate in the cluster meetings. They support and advise the Examinations Board in case of complaints or requests at the programme level. The Examinations Board is also supported by an Assessment Committee that advises the Board on the assurance of assessment by randomly examining the quality of assessment.

Recommendations previous panel

The 2019 panel was of the opinion that the feasibility of the Dutch-language track Film Studies and the Television and Cross-Media Culture track needed attention. The panel believed that placing these two professional specialisations in a dual master's programme could make it more feasible for students to attain all the intended learning outcomes. With regard to thesis assessment it believed that the transparency of the grading on the assessment forms could be improved. Both of these issues have been dealt with to the satisfaction of the present panel. The programme created a Dutch-language Documentary and Fiction track in the dual master's programme Media Studies, which complements the professional specialisations Film Studies and Television and Cross-Media Culture in the 60 EC MA Media Studies. To enhance the transparency of the grading process, the programme developed a thesis assessment rubric. To keep the grading process from turning into a box ticking exercise, it decided not to include the weight of each component in the assessment form, as the previous panel advised. The present panel respects this decision. The panel acknowledges the concern that including component weights could lead to a more rigid, less reflective grading process.

Standard 1. Intended learning outcomes

The intended learning outcomes tie in with the level and orientation of the programme; they are geared to the expectations of the professional field, the discipline, and international requirements.

Findings

The English-language 60 EC master's programme Media Studies at the UvA investigates media within their socio-cultural, political-economic, technological, and historical contexts. A particular focus is digitization and the cultural, economic, and political changes this trend brings along. The overall aim of the programme is to provide students with the knowledge, skills, and methods to critically examine specific media forms and

cultures, enabling them to perform independently and professionally at an advanced academic level within different professional settings.

To validate that the aims and content of the programme correspond with the needs of relevant sectors, the programme management meets annually with the Sounding Board Group, comprising of alumni who work in the media industry and provide insights into current developments in the field. Over the past decades, the MA Media Studies has continuously been adapted and further developed in response to fundamental changes in the global media landscape. This has led to the development of four tracks: Film Studies, Television and Cross-Media Culture, New Media and Digital Culture, and Cultural Data and AI. Film Studies offers a theoretically rigorous exploration of film and visual culture. Television and Cross-Media Culture explores the networked relations between popular digital, mobile and social media. New Media and Digital Culture is dedicated to the study of the social, political, and economic transformations brought by digital platforms and digital culture in general. Cultural Data & AI is the latest track; it was launched in 2024 in response to the rapid development of big data, artificial intelligence, and automation. The track trains students to examine this transformation and teaches them essential computational techniques, as well as critical reflection on these techniques and their consequences.

Distinctive characteristics of the MA Media Studies at the UvA are its broad scope, its interdisciplinary approach, its global outlook and a strong focus on methods. The programme translated its profile into a set of intended learning outcomes that are partly shared and partly specific to each track. An overview of the intended learning outcomes can be found in appendix 1. For the past eight years UvA's Media Studies Department - evaluated together with the Department of Communication Science - has been proclaimed the best in the world in the QS World University Rankings. Possibly as a consequence of this, interest in the programme has grown significantly in recent years, with 168 students enrolling in 2019/2020 and 427 in 2024/2025. Most students come from outside the Netherlands.

The panel found that the MA Media Studies at the UvA has a well-defined vision and profile, with an emphasis on theoretical engagement and methodological rigor. The programme is innovative and actively responds to trends in the media landscape, of which the recent launch of the Cultural Data and AI track is an eloquent example. The effectiveness of this initiative is demonstrated by the immediate enrolment of 100 students in the new track's first year. The panel commends the programme for its keen eye for emerging developments, while remaining firmly grounded in media history.

The panel found the intended learning outcomes clearly phrased and aligning with level 7 of the Dutch qualification frame NLQF (the master level), as well as with the Dublin descriptors. The intended learning outcomes provide a concrete interpretation of the distinctive character of the programme. The panel notes with appreciation that all tracks have their own set of intended learning outcomes, which gives a clear focus to each of the tracks. Furthermore, the panel commends the good balance between theory and practice in the intended learning outcomes, and their calibration with the professional field through the Sounding Board Group.

As the programme is no doubt aware, the possibly forthcoming legislation about internalisation in higher education in the Netherlands entails the risk that the number of international students will decrease in the coming years, and with it the income that the programmes generate. The committee's advice to the programme director is to have contingency plans in place that safeguard the future of this successful programme.

Considerations

The panel finds that the MA Media Studies at the University of Amsterdam has a strong and distinctive profile, combining theoretical depth with methodological rigor and historical awareness. The programme is innovative and responds effectively to media trends, as shown by the successful launch of the Cultural Data & AI track. The intended learning outcomes are well-formulated, aligned with national and international academic standards, and tailored to each track. The programme strikes a good balance between theory and practice and engages the professional field in continually updating its profile.

Conclusion

The panel concludes that the master's programme Media Studies (60 EC) meets standard 1.

Standard 2. Teaching-learning environment

The curriculum, the teaching-learning environment and the quality of the teaching staff enable the incoming students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

Findings

Curriculum

The full-time MA programme Media Studies covers one academic year and has two semesters; each semester has three blocks. Didactically, there is a gradual transition in the programme from broad socialization to individual mastery and professionalization, and from developing knowledge and understanding to applying and communicating these insights, making judgements, and autonomously studying and doing research. See appendix 2 for a curriculum overview.

In the first semester, each track has a different set of mandatory core courses. They are complemented by research seminars, allowing students to study specific topics and methods in depth, and to critically assess input and form their own position vis-à-vis both the academic literature and media objects they engage with. This is done through different types of assignments: analyses of media objects, oral presentations, research reports on a concept or theme, audiovisual assignments, research proposals and research papers, and annotated bibliographies. The assignments build on each other and become progressively more challenging. In case studies and research projects, scheduled in block three, students design and carry out their own research projects under the supervision of an instructor.

In the Film Studies track, the core course *Film Theories* (6 EC) develops students' knowledge of classical and contemporary debates on topics such as the ontology of the audiovisual image, culture and identity, posthumanism, psychoanalysis, affect, and genre. The core course *Cinema Histories and Cultures* (6 EC) trains students in historiographic approaches and concepts such as media archaeology, archives, cultural memory, diasporic and migratory media practices, and world cinema. Two 6 EC research seminars and a 6 EC research project build upon these core courses.

The Television and Cross-Media Culture track has two core courses as well. *Infrastructures and Networks* (6 EC) explores the theory, history, and performance of cross-media infrastructures that underpin and organize social practices and power relations. *Aesthetics and Storytelling* (6 EC) studies how cross-media dynamics lead to the development of new aesthetics and storytelling practices. Again, the semester also comprises two 6 EC research seminars and a 6 EC case studies project.

In the New Media and Digital Culture track's core course *Digital Research Methods*, (6 EC) students study topics in the digital world such as internet censorship, archived websites, search engines, Wikipedia, and platforms like YouTube and TikTok. *New Media Theories* (6 EC) provides knowledge on topics and perspectives in current debates within new media theory. Besides the core courses, the semester offers a 12 EC digital research seminar, where students engage in hands-on projects, using software tools and online data, and a 6 EC media theory seminar, exploring ideas about the logics behind different new media techniques.

The Cultural Data & AI track has two core courses: *Critical Perspectives on Data & AI - Concepts* (6 EC) provides students with a thorough understanding of theoretical perspectives on datafication, platformization, automation, surveillance, and AI, alongside relevant methodological traditions such as digital methods, platform and app studies, political economy, and critical data studies. *Cultural Data Analysis - Methods* (6 EC) teaches students to conduct data analysis. It covers the theoretical and practical basics, focussing on the basics of the Python language and introducing relevant libraries such as Pandas and Numpy. The semester also has two 6 EC methods courses and a 6 EC data project where students engage in group-based research involving social or cultural data analysis.

In the second semester, most students across all tracks spend 12 EC in blocks four and five on electives. The cluster Media Studies offers 16 electives at the master's level. They are research-oriented courses which introduce students to specialized theories, methods, or 'niche' media objects. In this semester, the Cultural Data & AI track provides students with a unique opportunity to take part in an embedded research project, within cultural organizations, governmental institutions, or leading research initiatives. These research projects are predefined, and developed collaboratively by staff members and partner institutions. Subsequently, students in all tracks write their thesis (18 EC) on a topic of their choice, under the guidance of their supervisor, who is a specialist in the subject area of the thesis.

The panel studied the curriculum and the content of the courses in the MA Media Studies. It concludes that in all tracks, the curriculum is coherently structured, guiding students from foundational theories and research methodologies to independent thesis research. The combination of core courses, research seminars, electives, and thesis work ensures a structured and progressive learning experience. Students have flexibility in shaping their academic journey through their choice of topics and elective courses, allowing them to specialize in areas aligned with their research interests and career ambitions. The interdisciplinary approach in the programme enhances intellectual depth and career preparedness. The panel found that although the four tracks differ, they are linked by their focus on different types of mass media and a unified vision on transferrable skills, which are trained throughout the tracks in similar ways. In conversation with the students and alumni, it became clear to the panel that they are on the whole pleased with the programme, which they find varied and both wide-range and in-depth. The panel welcomes the new track Cultural Data & AI. Given the rapid developments and wide-ranging implications of AI, the panel encourages the other tracks as well to take an active role in shaping its educational use. This includes not only exploring practical applications, but also embedding critical reflection on ethical, societal, and disciplinary consequences. Such an approach will help students engage with AI in a responsible and informed way, and prepare them for the challenges the technology poses within and beyond their field.

The new track Cultural Data & AI - which started from scratch with 129 students instead of the expected 60 - has been facing initial growing pains that sometimes led to unclear communication and organization, the students reported. The panel finds this understandable given the circumstances. However, it advises the programme and the faculty to get a better grip on these circumstances (see below under Admission). In the self-evaluation report, students ask for more hands-on projects. The panel recognizes and acknowledges the

inherent tensions that are typical for the field of media studies, where students often ask for more hands-on skills training, while faculty want to guard the academic level. The panel found that the MA programme strikes a good balance in this respect. The programme is primarily academically oriented, embedding practical skills without placing them at the forefront. Moreover, some alumni praised the combination of theory and skills training that the programme offers. Apparently, the practical relevance of seemingly theoretical knowledge becomes evident later on, when students have graduated from the programme and entered the labour market.

Language of instruction

The MA Media Studies is taught in English (and uses an English programme name). The programme puts forward a range of arguments for this decision. The media industry is increasingly international, and English is the primary language used in these companies. English is the lingua franca in the academic field as well. Therefore, fluency in English is a necessary requirement for Media Studies graduates to become successful professionals. In addition, a strong command of English is important for the study of contemporary media culture, and even more so if this is done from a global perspective, as is a central characteristic of the Media Studies programme at the UvA. Finally, the fact that the programme is taught in English allows students to reap the benefits of the international classroom. This setting promotes diverse perspectives, enhancing students' critical thinking and intercultural competence. The panel finds these arguments convincing and supports the decision to teach the programme in English.

Admission and feasibility

In order to enter the MA Media Studies programme, students need to hold an academic bachelor's degree from an accredited university in the humanities or social sciences, of which at least 60 research-oriented ECs relate specifically to media and culture or media and information as taught from a humanities perspective. In addition, students need the ability to speak, read, write and understand English at an advanced academic level. Supported by the faculty's admissions office, a selection committee evaluates if students meet these requirements. If they do not, students may be eligible to eliminate their deficiencies by completing the Media Studies pre-master's programme.

The panel found that generally, students find the programme feasible and most of them meet the exit qualifications within one academic year. It concludes that the entry requirements fit the programme. However, in the panel's view an unexpected enrolment of high numbers of students should be prevented to guarantee that all courses can be organized smoothly. In conversation with the staff, it became clear that they would like to limit the number of students in each track, so that they can offer the best possible learning experience. The panel's advice to the programme is to put a cap on the number of students for each track. In order to do this, the Teaching and Examination Regulations of the UvA's Faculty of Humanities need to be adapted. In its discussion with the faculty dean, the panel was pleased to learn that such a change is indeed under consideration. The panel encourages the Faculty of Humanities to allow for a cap on student numbers, and advises the programme management of the MA Media Studies to introduce such a cap as soon as possible.

Student support and information services

Each track in the MA Media Studies begins with an introductory day before the start of the first semester, to accommodate for students with different backgrounds in terms of culture and education. During the first semester, each student is invited by a lecturer who takes on the role as tutor to discuss study progress and social well-being. During the second semester, students have the option for a follow-up meeting with their tutor. Four study advisers are active in the Media Studies cluster (two for the two MA programmes). They help students manage their study plans and assist those whose study progress is impacted by personal

circumstances. In addition, the faculty offers the opportunity to follow language training and guidance in writing the thesis. During the thesis writing process, students have four to five meetings with their supervisor to ensure they are progressing in the right direction in terms of time, content, and structure. The supervisor provides feedback on the written work and monitors the student's progress.

In its discussion with the students and alumni, the panel found that they generally feel well-supported throughout the programme. This is worthy of a compliment to the programme staff, given the unexpected high influx of students. The panel heard from students that they feel satisfied with the way they are equipped for the labour market through for instance the annual Media Studies Career Day, that provides insights into the evolving media landscape. Some electives include collaborations with industry partners, allowing students to engage with real-world media practices. The embedded research project in the Cultural Data & AI track enables students to gain practical research experience, bridging the gap between academia and professional practice.

Some students reported that information on the online platform Canvas was inconsistent and therefore confusing. However, the panel studied the platform and found that the programmes make good use of it, offering all course materials, assignments, and resources conveniently in one place so that both students and lecturers can manage their work easily and efficiently through Canvas. It concludes that the confusion reported by the students seems to be an isolated incident and that overall Canvas is an effective instrument.

For students with special needs various facilities are on offer, such as support for dyslexia, AD(H)D, digital and physical accessibility, and examination facilities. Since 2024, every faculty at the UvA has a Testing and Education Facilities officer, who supports the study advisers to better assist students with special support needs. The programme management would like all activities to be accessible for students with physical challenges. Understandably, providing such accessibility is challenging for the faculty, since it is housed in old buildings, that cannot be easily adapted. However, the panel found that although the programme management repeatedly requested relatively simple measures such as wheelchair ramps, these requests have not yet been addressed. The panel flags this as an issue that should be resolved at the faculty level as far as possible within the physical constraints of the housing situation.

The panel was pleased to hear that the programme is striving to create a Virtual Reality film lab. It encourages the programme director to continue with this development and asks the faculty to support it. Such a lab would enrich the curriculum by offering further opportunities for practical skills development, which would help prepare students to thrive in the digital media landscape of the future. The same applies to licences for innovative video editing programmes.

Teaching staff

The MA Media Studies relies on a large, international teaching staff with a variety of research specializations that altogether offer a comprehensive survey of the field. Each track has its own team of permanent and temporary staff, led by a full professor. More than half of the lecturers have a PhD, a University Teaching Qualification, and a good command of spoken and written academic English. To continue developing as teachers, staff can follow courses offered by the UvA Teaching & Learning Centre. The courses taught by the MA staff are directly related to their research, particularly the research seminars, electives, projects and MA thesis. Staff expertise reflects state-of-the-art scholarship in media studies, which translates into research-driven teaching.

Lecturers in each track gather in monthly meetings, where they make sure that there is no significant overlap

between courses, that assignments are differentiated per course, and that the learning goals of the courses in combination work towards achieving the exit qualifications of the programme. In addition to these monthly meetings, there are regular moments of intervision and joint critical reflection. Based on these reflection moments, courses are revised and further developed for the following year.

The panel is very positive about the quality of the teaching staff in the MA programme Media Studies. The management and lecturers demonstrate vision, passion, drive, and team spirit, with a well-considered approach to integrating theory and critical reflection across all tracks. They seem to work together seamlessly, bringing notable enthusiasm and expertise in their respective fields. Most have successfully supervised numerous PhD candidates. Even temporary staff typically hold a PhD. It is particularly enriching for the programme that the faculty consists of internationally acclaimed and well-connected researchers and that their research is directly integrated into the course content, ensuring that students engage with the latest developments in the field. The strong international reputation of the programme attracts talent from far and wide, which in turn creates a flywheel effect and attracts even more highly reputed researchers. The lecturers each have a strong and autonomous research profile, which inspires the students.

Considerations

The panel finds the learning environment of the MA Media Studies programme to be strong and thoughtfully constructed. The blend of core courses, research seminars, electives, and thesis work provides a progressive and well-balanced academic experience. Students can tailor their studies to match personal interests and career goals. The interdisciplinary orientation and consistent training in transferable skills across all tracks enhance both intellectual development and employability. The panel appreciates how the programme balances academic rigour with practical skill development. The choice of English as the language of instruction (as well as for the programme title) supports the programme's international outlook. The newly introduced track Cultural Data & AI is currently dealing with organizational issues due to an unexpectedly high number of students. To safeguard quality and coherence, the panel advises to introduce a cap on admissions.

Teaching staff are internationally respected researchers with a strong track record in both scholarship and education. Their expertise feeds directly into the teaching, ensuring that students are exposed to current debates and developments in the field. The panel commends the staff's commitment, cohesion, and capacity to create a stimulating academic climate.

Despite the high student intake—especially in the new Cultural Data & AI track—the programme has maintained a supportive learning environment. Student support structures are well-developed and include proactive tutoring, study advisers, and thesis supervision. The programme is well-matched to the labour market through the integration of career-oriented activities, such as embedded research projects and industry collaborations.

Conclusion

The panel concludes that the master's programme Media Studies (60 EC) meets standard 2.

Standard 3. Student assessment

The programme has an adequate system of student assessment in place.

Findings

Assessment policy and practice

The assessment in the MA programme Media Studies follows the assessment policy framework of the University of Amsterdam. An assessment matrix has been prepared for the programme, in which the relationship between the exit qualifications, the learning objectives of each course and the method of testing is established. Each course has a syllabus outlining learning objectives and assessments, guaranteeing transparency and alignment. The MA programme employs various teaching and assessment formats shared across different tracks, including portfolios of weekly assignments, presentations, take-home exams, argumentative midterms or final essays, empirical research and data projects, research proposals and reports. It culminates in the master's thesis. For each course within the programme, a syllabus is developed in which the learning objectives and the types of assessment are described. To ensure transparency, the weighted grading criteria for each assessment are explained in the syllabus or in separate examination instructions. This is also where the resit procedure is explained. Compared to the BA programmes, the MA programme comprises fewer exams and more essays and research papers that gradually become longer and have to meet more advanced requirements. At a minimum, each course has at least two assessments with which the intended learning objectives are tested in various ways.

The course coordinator ensures that course manuals clarify in which instances the use of generative AI in the course is permitted, while the Teaching & Learning Centre offers lecturers workshops and instructions on how to make course assessment AI proof. When lecturers suspect the unauthorized use of a generative AI tool, they are encouraged to report it to the Examinations Board. When such reports are made, the Examinations Board arranges a hearing with the student and determines, based on all the evidence, whether unauthorized use of generative AI occurred and if a sanction is warranted.

Clear assessment criteria, answer models, and the four-eyes principle ensure reliable assessment. Summative assessments are never designed or reviewed individually; multiple assessors contribute to the evaluation process. For quality assurance, assessment records are compiled after completion of the course, consisting of at least the syllabus, the assessments, answer keys and grading forms. The assessment records are stored in a central archive and can be consulted by the Examinations Board and the Assessment Committee. The Programme Committee, consisting of staff and student members, monitors the quality of teaching and assessment by checking course evaluations, as well as whether learning objectives and assessment criteria have been clearly formulated and correspond with the exit qualification as described in the Teaching and Examination Regulations.

The panel studied the assessment matrix and the way it is applied in the courses. It concludes that assessment methods and practices are up to standard. The assessment methods are diverse and well-structured. While essays remain a primary assessment method, students have the option to engage in portfolio work, collaborative projects, and creative assignments. This variety reflects the applied and interdisciplinary nature of media studies. The assessment criteria for each course are clearly communicated via the study guide and Canvas. Students receive detailed feedback through written comments, helping them improve their academic performance. The panel appreciates that final grades are monitored for trends and irregularities, and encourages the programme to continue this practice. Regarding generative AI, the panel considers it a positive development that policies are already in place to address the challenges these technologies pose for assessment. It encourages the programme to continue engaging with these issues proactively, especially given their strong relevance to the content of the Media Studies programme.

Assessment of MA theses

The faculty's thesis regulations describe the requirements for the MA thesis and agreements concerning the supervision, assessment, deadline and resit. In addition, the MA programme has programme-specific thesis guidelines. These guidelines describe the intended learning outcomes and additional requirements for the thesis, the rules regarding supervision, and the submission procedure of the final version of the thesis. They also include a reference to the assessment forms. The quality of thesis assessment is ensured in three ways. First, the four-eyes principle is applied. Each thesis is assessed by the supervisor and a second examiner from the staff. The second examiner leads the grading process. If there is disagreement between the first and second examiner, the course coordinator assigns a third reader who considers the thesis and both examiners' arguments before finalizing the assessment and assigning a grade. Second, all final projects are evaluated using an assessment form. This form includes compulsory criteria such as research question, scientific framework, argument construction, and conclusion, while leaving space for individual feedback. A detailed assessment rubric specifically developed for the MA theses supports examiners in their assessment. Calibration sessions among faculty members are another instrument that helps maintain uniform grading standards. Finally, the Examinations Board conducts annual thesis reviews using a sample of theses and assessment forms. This review ensures that assessments are justified and judgments are well-explained.

The panel concludes that the thesis evaluation process is structured and rigorous. It studied samples of theses in the programme, together with their assessment forms. It found that the feedback on the assessment forms is detailed, ensuring that students understand their strengths and areas for improvement. Supervisors provide students with clear guidelines on research methodology, argumentation, and academic writing. The panel did find that in some theses research questions lack clarity, and/or the research methodology is not explicitly developed. The Examinations Board has already signalled this and is addressing the issue. The panel advises the programme to remain vigilant in this respect.

Examinations Board

As of September 2022, there is one Examinations Board for the Faculty of Humanities at the UvA. It consists of a chair, eight members and one external member. Each of the internal members chairs a cluster, which holds a number of related programmes. The BA and MA programmes in Media Studies form a cluster, and are represented in the Examinations Board by one of its eight internal members, who also chairs the cluster. In the Media Studies cluster, each track of the MA Media Studies has a representative. Whereas the Examinations Board has a wide span of control, the delegates in the clusters operate at a local level and support the cluster chair by checking the assessment programmes and their execution in specific tracks; they also advise on programme-specific issues and deal with complaints or reports of alleged plagiarism. The Examinations Board is convened every six weeks. Its members (the cluster chairs) then compare experiences, challenges and practices. This promotes consistency and continuous improvement of assessment throughout the faculty.

The Examinations Board is responsible for appointing examiners in the programmes. It contributes to the professionalization of lecturers and programme directors by organizing training courses and knowledge-sharing meetings. The Examinations Board checks the quality of thesis assessment by drawing a sample of five to ten percent of theses from each programme each year. The safeguarding of other types of assessment in the programmes is delegated to the Assessment Committee. This faculty-wide committee was established alongside the new setup of the faculty-wide Examinations Board in September 2022, to support the Examinations Board. It consists of three assessment specialists and performs extra quality checks in addition to the checks done by the clusters. The Assessment Committee meets every month. It selects certain topics to investigate, based on the issues at play within the faculty as reflected in for instance complaints.

The panel considers the division of responsibilities between the Examinations Board, clusters, and Assessment Committee to be clear and justifiable. It talked to the chair of the Examinations Board, the chair of the Media Studies cluster within the Board and a member of the Assessment Committee. It found these representatives capable and clearly aware of their responsibilities. The panel heard that the Examinations Board approaches the programme director whenever it finds any irregularities and that its advice is taken seriously. The panel therefore concludes that the Examinations Board (with the help of cluster delegates and Assessment Committee) safeguards the quality of assessment within the programmes in an appropriate manner. In doing so, it fulfils its statutory duty.

The panel flags an issue that is beyond the remit of the Media Studies programme management, but could be taken up by the Faculty of Humanities. The faculty could consider tasking the Assessment Committee with systematically reviewing course assessments through periodic sample checks—similar to the way thesis assessments are routinely monitored by the Examinations Board. It is the panel’s conviction that such proactive checks (at the cluster level) reduce the risk of flawed assessments, complaints, or appeals later in the process, and are therefore more effective than reactive investigations as are currently undertaken by the Assessment Committee.

Considerations

The panel finds that assessment in the MA programme is well-organized and diverse, reflecting the applied and interdisciplinary nature of media studies. Criteria are clearly communicated, and students receive detailed feedback. Thesis evaluation is rigorous, with transparent procedures and thorough feedback. The panel advises the programme to remain vigilant on clear research questions and a well-developed methodology. The division of responsibilities between the Examinations Board, the clusters that support it, and Assessment Committee is clear and effective. The Examinations Board fulfils its statutory duty. The panel advises the Faculty of Humanities at the UvA to consider more proactive monitoring of course assessments by the Assessment Committee.

Conclusion

The panel concludes that the master’s programme Media Studies (60 EC) meets standard 3.

Standard 4. Achieved learning outcomes

The programme demonstrates that the intended learning outcomes are achieved.

Findings

Theses

The panel studied a sample of the MA theses and found their general level high. The theses confirm that students meet the programme’s rigorous exit qualifications and showcase strong research skills, critical analysis, and engagement with contemporary media issues.

Careers

In conversation with the panel, alumni said that they found that the programme had set them off to a good start on their professional careers. They particularly praised the combination of theory and skills training that the programme offers. The programme’s international outlook and interdisciplinary structure ensure that graduates can work across different sectors and cultural contexts. The global perspective enhances their competitiveness in both academic and industry roles.

In 2024, the programme conducted a LinkedIn analysis to determine the professional positions of its graduates. This survey shows that they hold roles across five main areas: media production and management, research roles in cultural organizations, as cultural ‘makers’ and entrepreneurs, in communication, marketing, and advisory roles. Finally, some alumni have pursued international academic careers. The panel concludes that alumni have successfully transitioned into diverse career paths.

Considerations

Based on the level of the MA theses and the performance of alumni, the panel concludes that graduates of the master’s programme Media Studies achieve the intended learning outcomes. The panel found the theses generally of high level, and alumni find positions in the professional field that correspond to the programme’s aims and profile.

Conclusion

The panel concludes that the master’s programme Media Studies (60 EC) meets standard 4.

General conclusion

The panel’s assessment of the master’s programme Media Studies (60 EC) is positive.

While the panel offers the programme and faculty some advice for improvement as stated above, it formulated no specific recommendations to be addressed by the next assessment panel.

Appendix 1. Intended learning outcomes

Master's programme Mediastudies (60 EC)

Knowledge and understanding

K1. The student has insight into the key research methods in the field of study. The student who has completed the track **Film Studies** of the Master's degree programme:

K1a: can interpret a variety of films and other audio-visual objects and practices by means of a variety of paradigms and methodologies;

The student who has completed the track **Television and Cross-Media Culture** of the Master's degree programme:

K1b: can investigate individual television and cross-media content by means of a variety of theoretical approaches and methodologies (including - depending on unit of study availability and units of study selected - formal and aesthetic analysis, industry research, political economy, feminist and gender studies, fan studies, etc.)

The student who has completed the track **New Media** of the Master's degree programme:

K1c: can investigate new media and digital culture by means of a variety of theoretical approaches and methodologies -- including -- depending on the units of study availability and units of study selected digital methods, political economy, platform and app studies, and critical data studies.

The student who has completed the track the **Cultural Data and AI** of the Master's degree programme:

K1d. can investigate the cultural implications of data and AI by means of a variety of theoretical approaches and methodologies (including -- depending on unit of study availability and units of study selected -- (critical and computational) cultural and social data analysis; digital methods, social network analysis, critical data and AI studies, software, platform, and infrastructure analysis, industry research, political economy, (auto-)ethnography, internet studies, app studies, etc.)

K2. The student builds on previously acquired knowledge and in particular acquires insight into some specialist parts of the field of study and/or parts of (other) fields.

The student who has completed the track **Film Studies** of the Master's degree programme:

K2a. can demonstrate knowledge and critical understanding of the various theories and histories of film and cinema, as well as their most recent developments and transformations in screen and digital culture;

The student who has completed the track **Television and Cross-Media Culture** of the Master's degree programme:

K2b. can demonstrate knowledge and critical understanding of the history, cultural and technical forms of the cross-media landscape and their antecedents in television;

The student who has completed the track the **New Media and Digital Culture** of the Master's degree programme:

K2c. can demonstrate knowledge and critical understanding of new media and digital culture and their historical and recent transformations;

The student who has completed the track the **Cultural Data and AI** of the Master's degree programme:

K2d. can demonstrate knowledge and critical understanding of cultural data and AI and their historical and recent transformations; as well as work with computational methods.

Applying knowledge and understanding

A1. The student is able to independently carry out research in the field of study. The student is able to independently formulate questions with regard to the field of study, to operationalise those questions and represent them in a research plan.

A2. The student is able to assess the academic practice in line with the Dutch Code of Conduct for Academic Practice (see the Dutch Code of Conduct for Research Integrity on the website of the UvA: Academic Integrity).

A3. The student is able to answer scientific questions using knowledge of a specialism within the degree programme.

A4. The student can connect the scientific knowledge and insights gained in the field of study to social issues and apply them within a broader or multidisciplinary context.

Judgement

J1. The student can connect to recent scientific practice within the field of study, interpret and assess its results, and take up their own position within it.

J2. The student is able to assess relevant academic literature.

The student who has completed the track **Film Studies** of the Master's degree programme:

J2a. can navigate through a wide range of theoretical approaches and traditions in the field, and can make productive connections with neighbouring disciplines;

The student who has completed the track **Television and Cross-Media Culture** of the Master's degree programme:

J2b. can navigate and critically assess a variety of cross-media practices in their complexity and cross-media culture in general;

J2c. can chart and analyse the shifts in the style, content and general aesthetics of televisual and cross-media texts.

J2d. can determine the industrial significance of emerging cross-media practices, technologies and forms;

The student who has completed the track the **New Media and Digital Culture** of the Master's degree programme:

J2e. can navigate and interpret a variety of new media practices in their complexity and in digital culture in general;

J2f. can demonstrate knowledge and critical understanding of new media and digital culture and their historical and recent transformations;

The student who has completed the track **Cultural Data and AI** of the Master's degree programme:

J2g. can navigate and interpret key practices related to cultural data and AI in their complexity;

J2h. can demonstrate knowledge and critical understanding of cultural data and AI and their historical and recent transformations; as well as work with computational methods;

J3. The student is able to reflect on the implications of the insights in their own field of study for relevant institutional contexts and contemporary societal issues.

Communication

C1. The student is able to report orally and in writing on independent research in a way that complies with the common academic conventions in the field of study.

C2. The student is able to present any scientific knowledge and insights gained during the degree programme and transfer them to an audience broader than the academic community.

Learning skills

L1. The student is able to work in a team and to provide and incorporate feedback in a constructive way.

The student who has completed the track **Film Studies** of the Master's degree programme:

L1a. can collaborate within interdisciplinary teams in an academic and media-cultural context, manage diverse perspectives and diverging interests, and bridge and connect individual and collective insights and achievements.

The student who has completed the track **Television and Cross-Media Culture** of the Master's degree programme:

L1b. can collaborate within interdisciplinary teams in a cross-media context, manage diverse perspectives and diverging interests, and bridge and connect individual and collective insights and achievements.

The student who has completed the track **New Media and Digital Culture** of the Master's degree programme:

L1c can collaborate within interdisciplinary teams in a new media and digital culture context, manage diverse perspectives and diverging interests, and bridge and connect individual and collective insights and achievements.

The student who has completed the track **Cultural Data and AI** of the Master's degree programme:

L1d. can collaborate within interdisciplinary teams in a cultural, media, or public governance context (including – depending on the Embedded Research Project selected – within an organisational setting), manage diverse perspectives and diverging interests, and bridge and connect individual and collective insights and achievements.

L2. The student is able to reflect on their own position and on the knowledge that they have acquired and to identify areas of development.

Appendix 2. Programme curriculum

Master's programme Mediastudies (60 EC)

Semester 1:

Film Studies			
Courses	Block 1	Block 2	Block 3
<i>Film Theories (6 EC)</i>	●	●	●
<i>Film Research Seminar I (6 EC)</i>	●	●	●
<i>Cinema Histories and Cultures (6 EC)</i>	●	●	●
<i>Film Research Seminar II (6 EC)</i>	●	●	●
<i>Research Project (6 EC)</i>	●	●	●

Television and Cross-Media Culture			
Courses	Block 1	Block 2	Block 3
<i>Infrastructures and Networks (6 EC)</i>	●	●	●
<i>Aesthetics and Storytelling (6 EC)</i>	●	●	●
<i>Cross-media Research Seminar I (6 EC)</i>	●	●	●
<i>Cross-media Research Seminar II (6 EC)</i>	●	●	●
<i>Case Studies Television and Cross-Media (6 EC)</i>	●	●	●

New Media & Digital Culture			
Courses	Block 1	Block 2	Block 3
<i>Digital Research Methods (6 EC)</i>	●	●	●
<i>New Media Theories (6 EC)</i>	●	●	●
<i>Media Theory Seminar (6 EC)</i>	●	●	●
<i>Digital Research Seminar (12 EC)</i>	●	●	●

Cultural Data & AI			
Courses	Block 1	Block 2	Block 3
<i>Critical Perspectives on Data & AI – Concepts (6 EC)</i>	●	●	●
<i>Critical Perspectives on Data & AI – Methods (6 EC)</i>	●	●	●
<i>Cultural Data Analysis – Concepts (6 EC)</i>	●	●	●
<i>Cultural Data Analysis – Methods (6 EC)</i>	●	●	●
<i>Data Project (6 EC)</i>	●	●	●

● Core course ● Research seminar ● Case Studies & Research Projects

Semester 2:

MA Media Studies semester 2			
Courses	Block 1	Block 2	Block 3
<i>Electives or Embedded Research Project (12 EC)</i>	●	●	●
<i>Master's Thesis (18 EC)</i>	●	●	●

● Elective or Embedded Research Project ● Thesis

Appendix 3. Programme of the site visit

Monday 10 March 2025

<i>Time</i>	<i>Interview</i>
10:00 10:45	Panel arrival / welcome with <i>informatiemarkt</i>
10:45 11:00	Closed panel meeting
11:00 11:30	Faculty management
11:30 12:15	Management Bachelor Programmes
12:15 13:30	Closed panel meeting and lunch
13:30 14:15	Students B Media and Culture (incl. Programme Committee & alumni)
14:15 15:00	Students B Media and Information (incl. Programme Committee & alumni)
15:00 15:30	Closed panel meeting
15:30 16:15	Teaching staff B Media and Culture (incl. Programme Committee)
16:15 17:00	Teaching staff B Media and Information (incl. Programme Committee)
17:00 17:30	Closed panel meeting

Tuesday 11 March 2025

<i>Time</i>	<i>Interview</i>
08:45 10:45	Closed panel meeting
10:45 11:30	Programme management M Media Studies (60 EC)
11:30 12:15	Students M Media Studies (60 EC, incl. Programme Committee & Alumni)
12:15 12:30	Break
12:30 13:15	Teaching staff MA Media Studies (60 EC, incl. Programme Committee)
13:15 14:15	Closed panel meeting and lunch
14:15 15:00	Programme management M Media Studies (90 EC)
15:00 15:45	Students M Media Studies (90 EC, incl. Programme Committee & Alumni)
15:45 16:00	Break
16:00 16:45	Teaching staff MA Media Studies (90 EC, incl. Programme Committee)
16:45 18:00	Closed panel meeting

Wednesday 12 March 2025

<i>Time</i>	<i>Interview</i>
09:00 09:45	Programme management M Communication and Information Studies
09:45 10:30	Students M Communication and Information Studies (incl. Programme Committee & Alumni)
10:30 10:45	Break
10:45 11:30	Teaching staff M Communication and Information Studies (Incl. Programme Committee)
11:30 12:15	Examinations Board
12:15 15:00	Closed panel meeting and lunch
15:00 15:45	Final interview management <u>all</u> Programmes
15:45 16:15	Closed panel meeting
16:15 17:15	Development dialogue
17:15 17:30	Main findings presented by panel chair
17:30	<i>Drinks</i>

Appendix 4. Materials

Prior to the site visit, the panel studied 15 theses of the bachelor's programme Media and Culture, 15 theses of the bachelor's programme Media and Information, 15 theses of the master's programme Communication and Information Studies, 15 theses of the master's programme Mediastudies (60 EC) and 15 theses of the master's programme Mediastudies (90 EC). Information on the theses is available from Academion upon request.

The panel also studied other materials, which included:

- Deel A MA OER 24-25
- OER 24-25 Part B - MA Media Studies
- Assessment Matrix
- List of teaching staff MA
- Thesis assessment form
- Key figures M Mediastudies 1 jaar 2024 – 2025
- Self-Evaluation Report MA Mediastudies 2025
- Report of the previous accreditation
- Thesis Assessment Rubric
- Annual reports Examination Board
- Documentation from several courses, including course guides
- Faculty wide assessment policy
- Faculty wide strategic plan 2021 – 2026
- Policy plans on support for students with an impairment